

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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----- 014267

R 231403Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9123

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 5781

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT PINR SGEN ET

SUBJECT: TRADITIONAL ELITES: WHERE DO THEY STAND?

REFS: (A) ADDIS 4515 AND 4350; (B) ADDIS 4680 AND 5670;

(C) ADDIS 4936 AND 4733

1. IT WAS WIDELY EXPECTED DURING LAST MONTH'S WAVE ARRESTS (REF B) THAT MILITARY ACTIVISTS WOULD ALSO DETAIN POWERFUL AND UNPOPULAR NOBLES LIKE RAS MESFIN, RAS ASRAET KASSA AND ENKU-SELASSIE BROTHERS. WHILE IT THOUGHT THAT SEHAYU ENKU-SELASSIE TOOK REFUGE IN SHOA COUNTRYSIDE AND UNSUCCESSFULLY ATTEMPTED STIR UP AMHARAS IN DEFENSE OF MONARCHY AND HIMSELF, IT NOW CERTAIN RAS MESFIN REMAINED AT HIS HOME IN ADDIS. RUMORS OF IMPENDING ARREST OF THESE NOBLES BY REFORM MILITARYHAVE INTENSIFIED PAST THREE DAYS. SOME ADDIS RESIDENTS ASKING WHY THESE MEN ALLOWED REMAIN FREE.

2. POPULAR EXPLANATIONS FOR IEG AND ACTIVIST MILITARY UNWILLING-NESS MOVE AGAINST THEM INCLUDE:

A) MILITARYREFORM FACTIONS AFRAID INITIATE VIOLENCE NECESSARY TO SEIZE RASES MESFIN AND ASRATE. BOTH MAINTAIN "PRIVATE ARMIES" WHO
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WOULD DEFEND THEM. RAS MESFIN'S DAUGHTER RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT

SOLDIERS DID ATTEMPT ARREST HER FATHER IN LATE APRIL. WHEN HE THREATENED TO RESIST UNTIL DEATH, SOLDIERS WITHDREW PEACEFULLY.

B) EMPEROR STRONGLY OPPOSED ARREST OF MEMBERS ARISTOCRACY AS THIS WOULD REMOVE IMPORTANT BUFFER PROTECTING HIM AND ROYAL FAMILY. ENDALKACHEW AND ABIY ALSO AGAINST ANY SUCH ARRESTS. MODERATE MILITARY LEADERS RESPECTED EMPEROR'S WISHES AND EXEMPTED ARISTOCRATS.

C) ONCE COL. ALEM-ZEWD GAINED CONTROL OF COORDINATING COMMITTEE, HE WORKED WITH ENDALKACHEW, ABIY AND RAS ASRATE TO PREVENT ARRESTS OF TRADITIONAL ELITES (SEE REFS C).

D) REFORM MILITARY ARE LED BELIEVE AND FEAR THAT ARREST POWERFUL NOBLES COULD PROVOKE CIVIL WAR, OR AT LEAST MAJOR UPRISING. THERE NUMEROUS RUMORS THAT "HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS" SHOAN AMHARA PEASANTS LED BY PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION (RAS MESFIN IS PRESIDENT), ELEMENTS OF TERRITORIAL ARMY, RETIRED MILITARY, CHURCH LEADERS, ETC. ARE PREPARED PROTECT BY FORCE SHOAN RULE AND ARISTOCRACY. (OBSERVERS POINT OUT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT WELL-PUBLICIZED LOYALTY CALL ON EMPEROR MAY 21 BY REPS OF NORTHERN SHOANS SYMBOLIZED THEIR RESISTANCE TO THOSE WHO MIGHT THREATEN SHOAN CROWN.)

E) MILITARY REFORM FACTIONS LACK SUFFICIENT INTERNAL COHESION, COORDINATION AND DIRECTION TO EFFECT ARRESTS, PARTICULARLY IN FACE OPPOSITION FROM SOME MODERATE MILITARY ELEMENTS ALIGNED WITH ARISTOCRATIC INTERESTS AS REPRESENTED BY RAS ASRATE, GEN. ABIY AND ENDALKACHEW.

3. THERE INDICATIONS ENDALKACHEW, GEN. ABIY AND RAS ASRATE "ARISTOCRATIC CORE" HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL IN CONTAINING AND GENERALLY OUT-MANEUVERING MORE REFORM-MINDED AND RADICAL ELEMENTS PARTICULARLY IN LAST FEW WEEKS. TACTICS BEING USED BY THEM TO HELP CEMENT THEIR POSITIONS AND TO WEAKEN AND DIVIDE OTHER CONTENDERS ARE THOUGHT TO INCLUDE TRANSFERS OF REAL OR POTENTIAL CHALLENGERS; USE OF "SOMALI THREAT" BOTH TO CONTAIN MILITARY AND CIVIL DISSIDENCE AND TO EXTRACT ADDITIONAL USG MILITARY ASSISTANCE WHICH THEY CAN PORTRAY AS USG SUPPORT FOR CURRENT LEADERSHIP; OBTAINING CO-OPERATION OF SOME MILITARY NCO'S AND OTHERS BY USE OF BRIBES, ETC.; AND EXPLOITATION OF "THREAT FROM CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS" TO HEIGHTEN FEAR OF VIOLENCE SHOULD REFORMERS PUSH TOO FAR.

4. WHILE OPPOSITION IN COUNTRY TO DISSOLUTION OF TRADITIONAL
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MONARCHIAL STRUCTURE NO DOUBT EXISTS AND COULD EMERGE AS SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR "RADICALS", WE THINK STORIES OF MASSIVE ORGANIZED FORCE PREPARING FOR CIVIL WAR AS DESCRIBED PARA 2 (D) CONSIDERABLY EXAGGERATED.

5. WE TEND VIEW "THREAT FROM THE RIGHT" MORE AS ONE OF LOCALIZED IMPEDIMENT TO CHANGE. CONSERVATIVE PROVINCIAL ELITE BLOCKED REFORMS CONSIDERED CONTRARY THEIR VESTED INTERESTS UNDER PM AKILILU

AND WILL CONTINUE ATTEMPT TO DO SO NOW. EXAMPLE OF THIS PROBLEM OCCURRED THIS WEEK IN ARUSSI PROVINCE WHERE DYNAMIC, CAPABLE TESFA BUSHEN (FORMER MINSTATE IN AG.) WAS RECENTLY ASSIGNED GOVERNOR GENERAL. WHEN HE RELUCTANT PROVIDE POLICE PROTECTION TO BIG LANDLORDS HARASSED BY DISPLACED TENANTS, PRIVNICIAL ELITE WORKED TOGETHER WITH POLICE CHIEF TO UNDERMINE TESFA'S AUTHORITY AND TO "CONTROL" TENANTS. ACCORDING RELIABLE SWEDISH SOURCES WHO SPONSOR CHILAG AGRIC. DEV. UNIT (CADU) IN AREA, POLICE PICKED UP TESFA THREE DAYS AGO AND DELIVERED HIM TO ADDIS. CADU ALSO CONSIDERED "DISRUPTIVE, DANGEROUS ELEMENT" BY PROVINCIAL ELITE AND SOME ITS STAFF BEING PERSECUTED. (SWEDES WERE EVACUATED FROM ARUSSI MAY 22.) LOWER HOUSE PARLIAMENT ON MAY 23 DISCUSSED SERIOUS SITUATION IN ARUSSI AND REQUESTED PRESENCE MININTERIOR TO EXPLAIN ROLE OF POLICE, TESFA'S FORCED REMOVAL AND IEG INTENTIONS. COMMENT: WE CAN EXPECT SIMILAR INCIDENTS WHEN CENTRAL OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PROVOKE OPPOSITION OF ENTRENCHED PROVINCIAL ELITE.

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